

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ATHENS 09048 231208Z

12

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-05

SAM-01 SAJ-01 /062 W

----- 013866

P 231110Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6698

INFO SECDEF PRIORITY

USCINCEUR PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR PRIORITY

USDOCOSOUTH PRIORITY

CNO PRIORITY

DIA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 9048

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, MARR, GR

SUBJECT: GOG DENIAL OF US NAVY SHIP VISIT

REF: USDAO ATHENS 181315Z DEC 74 (NOTAL)

1. ON DECEMBER 17, USDAO WAS INFORMED BY HELLENIC NAVY COMMAND (HNC) THAT PERMISSION FOR PORT VISIT BY A DESTROYER TO PATRAS DURING PERIOD DECEMBER 18-21 HAD BEEN DENIED. WITH EXCEPTION OF HOMEPORTED DESTROYERS (WHOSE MOVEMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN RESTRICTED), THIS WAS TO HAVE BEEN FIRST VISIT BY U.S. NAVY SHIP TO ANY GREEK PORT OTHER THAN BY AUXILIARY SHIPS SUPPORTING HOMEPORTED SQUADRON OR SEALIFTING MATERIEL OUT OF SOUDA BAY. WE DISCUSSED DENIAL WITH DEFMIN AVEROFF AT SOCIAL FUNCTION NIGHT OF DECEMBER 17, AND HE INDICATED HE WOULD TAKE ACTION ON FOLLOWING DAY TO REVERSE DECISION. REFTEL DESCRIBES HNC DECEMBER 18 ACTION REITERATING DENIAL OSTENSIBLY BECAUSE OF ALLEGED, UNSPECIFIED RISK THAT INCIDENTS INVOLVING U.S. SAILORS WOULD BE CREATED, WHICH, HNC SUGGESTED, WOULD BE PARTICULARLY UNDESIRABLE AT TIME OF ELECTION OF INTERIM PRESIDENT
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PAGE 02 ATHENS 09048 231208Z

OF GREECE. DATT WAS TOLD THAT "FOR THIS REASON AND ONLY THIS

REASON THE NEGATIVE RESPONSE WAS GIVEN".

2. WE FIND THE STATED RATIONALE FOR THE REITERATED DENIAL UNPERSUASIVE. ALTHOUGH THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INCIDENT OCCURRING CANNOT BE DENIED, AND PARTICULARLY SO IN VIEW OF PRESS CRITICISM U.S. FORCES HAVE RECEIVED IN PAST FIVE MONTHS, AS FAR AS WE HAVE BEEN

ABLE TO DETERMINE, THERE WAS NO FOREKNOWLEDGE AMONG GREEK PUBLIC GENERALLY AND PATRAS RESIDENTS SPECIFICALLY OF PROPOSED SHIP VISIT. ADDITIONALLY, ELECTION OF INTERIM PRESIDENT TOOK PLACE IN PARLIAMENT BUILDING IN ATHENS AND HAD LITTLE IMPACT ON DAILY ROUTINE OF GREEK PUBLIC. IT SEEMS CLEAR IN VIEW OF DEFMIN'S FAILURE TO REVERSE DECISION THAT DENIAL WAS RATIFIED, IF NOT INITIATED, AT LEAST AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL (I.E., MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND, PERHAPS, MINISTER OF PUBLIC ORDER) WITH STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT CARAMANLIS PERSONALLY WAS INVOLVED.

3. REAL REASONS FOR DENIAL AT THIS TIME IN OUR VIEW ARE DYNAMICS OF INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION, INCLUDING FACT THAT U.S. GREEK SECURITY RELATIONSHIP REMAINS A VERY ACTIVE AND DELICATE ISSUE ON GREEK POLITICAL SCENE. CARAMANLIS IS SENSITIVE TO ATTACKS FROM LEFT IN GENERAL, INCLUDING FROM PASOK LEADER ANDREAS PAPANDREOU. SHOULD VISIT TO PATRAS HAVE TAKEN PLACE, PAPANDREOU WOULD PROBABLY HAVE CITED VISIT AS PROOF THAT GOG HAS DONE NOTHING TO IMPLEMENT AUGUST 14 DECISION, RECENTLY AFFIRMED BY CARAMANLIS IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM, TO WITHDRAW FROM MILITARY WING OF NATO AND RESTRUCTURE SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WITH UNITED STATES. AT A MINIMUM, THIS INTERPRETATION SUGGESTS THAT CARAMANLIS WOULD NOT WISH TO HAVE A U.S. SHIP VISIT (OTHER THAN HOMEPORTED SHIPS, WHICH DO NOT REQUIRE PERMISSION AND WHOSE VISIBILITY HAS BEEN DIMINISHED CONSIDERABLE BY THE HABITUAL NATURE OF THEIR MOVEMENTS AND THEIR RELATIVE ISOLATION) BEFORE PUBLICLY APPARENT STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN AT LEAST TO BEGIN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION ON WITHDRAWAL/RESTRUCTURING.

4. MOREOVER, CARAMANLIS IS IN POLITICALLY HIGHLY SENSITIVE STAGE OF ADAPTING GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE OF GREECE TO REPUBLICAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT, FOR WHICH GREEK PEOPLE OPTED IN REFERENDUM OF DECEMBER 8, 1974. NEW PARLIAMENT IS ABOUT TO RECEIVE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ATHENS 09048 231208Z

PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES, WHICH IT IS EMPOWERED TO ENACT, AND IT IS CLEAR THAT SOME POLITICAL HEAT WILL BE GENERATED BY OPPOSITION'S REACTION TO CHANGES WIDELY ANTICIPATED TO BE AIMED AT GREATLY STRENGTHENING EXECUTIVE (I.E., CARAMANLIS). IT APPEARS TO US THAT THIS SITUATION MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN ANOTHER FACTOR IN GOG'S DENIAL OF THE PATRAS VISIT. IF SO, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT CARAMANLIS WILL WISH TO DEFER ANY U.S. SHIP VISITS UNTIL FORM OF GOVERNMENT IS DECIDED AND

TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF GREEK POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND OF PARLIAMENT COME TO AN END. WE WOULD HOPE THIS WILL BE A MATTER OF A MONTH OR SO, BUT WE CANNOT BE SURE OF TIMING.

5. IN PREVIOUS DISCUSSION OF VISITS WITH CINCUSNAVUER, WE SUGGESTED THAT IN VIEW OF IMPORTANCE OF GREEK LIBERTY PORTS TO MAINTENANCE OF SIXTH FLEET ELEMENTS IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN RESUMPTION OF SHIP VISITS BEGIN WITH SMALLER VISITS AT OUTLYING PORTS, GRADUALLY WORKING BACK TO ATHENS AND UP TO CARRIER VISIT AT TIME YET TO BE DETERMINED. PROPOSED PATRAS VISIT WAS TO BE INITIAL VISIT UNDER THIS PROGRAM. IN VIEW OF IMPORTANCE OF GREEK PORTS TO SIXTH FLEET, SPECIAL EFFORTS WE ARE MAKING TO MET GREEK MILITARY NEEDS, AND MANNER IN WHICH DENIAL OF PATRAS VISIT WAS CHARACTERIZED BY HNC (EVEN IF SPECIOUSLY) AS EXCEPTIONAL ACT FOR UNUSUAL REASONS, WE BELIEVE THAT ANOTHER PROPOSAL FOR VISIT OF SIXTH FLEET SHIP TO ANOTHER OUTLYING PORT, SUCH AS CORFU, SHOULD BE ATTEMPTED IN LATTER PART OF JANUARY OR IN FEBRUARY. IN SO DOING, WE SHOULD REALIZE THAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT LEAD TO ANOTHER DENIAL OF VISIT BY GOG. NEVERTHELESS, WE FAVOR PERSISTENCE IN PURSUING THIS COURSE BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF LIGHT BUT CALCULATED PRESSURE TO REMIND GOG OF FACT OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS IN U.S.-GREEK SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WILL BE USEFUL AS WE APPROACH THE PERIOD OF REVIEW AND NEGOTIATION OF OUR MILITARY PRESENCE IN GREECE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PORT CALLS, NAVAL SHIPS, ALLEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ATHENS09048
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740372-0750
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741216/aaaaanem.tel
Line Count: 141
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 74 USDAO ATHENS 181315Z, 74 DEC 74
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 MAY 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <20 MAR 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOG DENIAL OF US NAVY SHIP VISIT
TAGS: MPOL, MARR, GR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005